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ABSTRACT

A study examined whether Reading Recovery students in a consortium of six school districts in Plainfield, Illinois were able to read increasingly more difficult text, and whether discontinued reading Recovery children maintain the ability to read average level classroom materials through the fifth grade. Results indicated that children do maintain the gains achieved and are able to benefit from regular classroom instruction in subsequent years in school. Future studies will streamline data collection procedures, use comparison groups in each classroom and across grade levels, and use a control set of materials. Contains 7 figures of data. (RS)

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Followup Study for Reading Recovery in Plainfield, Illinois.

by Joelle L. Schlesinger

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Followup study for Reading Recovery in Plainfield, Illinois

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Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is an early intervention program for first graders who experience difficulty reading after one year of schooling. Through early intervention, Reading Recovery can halt the debilitating cycle of failure. In a short time it can enable children to read at the average level of their first grade class or school population. The Reading Recovery program is designed to serve the lowest achieving readers. Instruction in the program continues until the child has developed a self-extending system and can read and write as well as the average child in his/her classroom. When the child has demonstrated the use of independent reading and writing strategies and can benefit from classroom instruction, daily Reading Recovery lessons are discontinued. The goal of Reading Recovery is accelerated learning. Each child is expected to make faster-than-average progress so that he or she can catch up with other children in class.

Questions of whether gains made in Reading Recovery are sustained over time have been explored by many local sites. Research indicates that Reading Recovery students not only become average or better readers in first grade, they develop a "self extending" learning system, which enables them to continue learning at least as quickly as their peers in later grades.

Several of these longitudinal studies are cited in the *Executive Summary Reading Recovery Council of North America, 1996*. The most common criticism of this research is that it only looks at the successful students. The purpose of this investigation was to look at the sustained results of the program as well as to review the progress of all children served at the Plainfield, Illinois, site.

History

The Plainfield, Illinois, site was established as a consortium of 6 districts in 1991-92. During the first year there were 2 trained Reading Recovery teacher leaders and 19 teachers in training. These teachers served 102 children in 21 schools. Seven additional teachers from seven schools in the East Aurora school district joined the consortium in 1993-94. The excitement of the program and its success was understandable. Questions were raised by administrators, classroom teachers, and Reading Recovery teachers as to how the children would continue to do in the second and third grades.

A followup data sheet and general framework on which to record the progress of the Reading Recovery children was created. This data collection included information on reading level on the Observation Survey and classroom material, class grades, and local standardized tests. (Refer to Appendix A., Ford 1991). For this investigation, only reading levels are considered.

Since the onset of the Plainfield Consortium, data on the progress of all Reading Recovery children served have been collected twice a year. Although Reading Recovery teacher leaders and teachers have changed and the number has expanded over the first 5 years of implementation, data were collected faithfully by all involved. It is because of the dedication and hard work of the Reading Recovery teachers at the site that we are able to look at the current levels of reading achievement of children who are now in fifth grade.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to analyze the data collected during the first five years of implementation at the Plainfield, Illinois, site.

The following questions guided our study:

1) Are Reading Recovery children able to read increasingly more difficult text at grade level as measured by the Observation Survey?
2) Do Discontinued Reading Recovery children maintain the ability to read average level classroom materials as chosen by their teachers and do they maintain this ability through the fifth grade?

Definitions

For this study it was necessary to look at data for two groups of children: all children served and children successfully discontinued from lessons. The "all children" category includes every child served even for only one day and discontinued children. "Discontinued" children were exited from lessons as strategic readers who read at or above the average of their class.

Method

Reading Recovery teachers listened to children read each year. There were two types of passages the teachers used: a predetermined set of text samples and novel text chosen by their classroom teacher. Second and third graders were asked to orally read both kinds of text. Fourth and fifth graders were only tested on their ability to read "average" classroom material. The set of sample text of increasing difficulty were passages selected from Scott Foresman and Ginn Company basal materials and leveled according to text difficulty for use with a Reading Recovery research project (Ohio, 1984). Classroom teachers provided a story from the basal text or a novel which would be introduced within the week. This provided the children with new text they would be expected to read along with their peers. Running records were taken of these passages. In

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every instance, children were given a brief summary of the passage or story, and then asked to read orally while a running record was taken. Accuracy level and self-correction rate were noted, in addition to Reading Recovery teachers' comments on students' comprehension, strategic behaviors, fluency, and the confidence of the child. All was documented on the followup data sheet.

Findings

The results of the longitudinal study indicate Reading Recovery provided long-term positive effects for both groups of students. These children were identified in first grade as being the most needy. Through their participation in the Reading Recovery program students experienced accelerated progress and were able to read and write within the average range in their classrooms. The findings indicate that children are able to read increasingly more difficult text as measured by Task 6 of the Observation Survey through third grade. Children successfully discontinued from lessons are able to score well on classroom materials throughout their years in grade school. The data also show that most of the children who received Reading Recovery were able to maintain the ability to read classroom material at a 90% accuracy rate or better through 5th grade.

Question #1 Are Reading Recovery children able to read increasingly more difficult text at grade level as measured by the Observation Survey?

During the second and third grades, all children were administered the text levels on the Observation Survey. The levels represent the highest level considered for each grade level. Text levels corresponding to grade level materials are, Levels 14-16=grade 1 — 18-20=grade 2 — 22-24=grade 3

The data suggest the answer to question #1 is positive. Children did read increasingly more difficult text as measured on Task 6 of the Observation Survey. At least 90% of all children served were able to read passages designated at their grade level: level 20 in grade 2 and level 24 in grade 3. (See Figure 1) As expected, there was a higher percentage of discontinued children who read at these levels. There is a higher percentage of children able to read the third grade passage in third grade, suggesting that they continue to benefit from classroom instruction.

It is tentative at best, to judge a program on the success of children served during one year, 1991-92. Although most teachers involved in the first implementation year were in training, it was expected that data from subsequent years would show the same trends. The increased number of trained teachers in the consortium were able to serve more children during each progressive year. Figures 2 and 3 below show the next two classes of Reading Recovery children followed, 1992-93 and 1993-94, and the percentage of each group scoring 90% or better on Task 6.

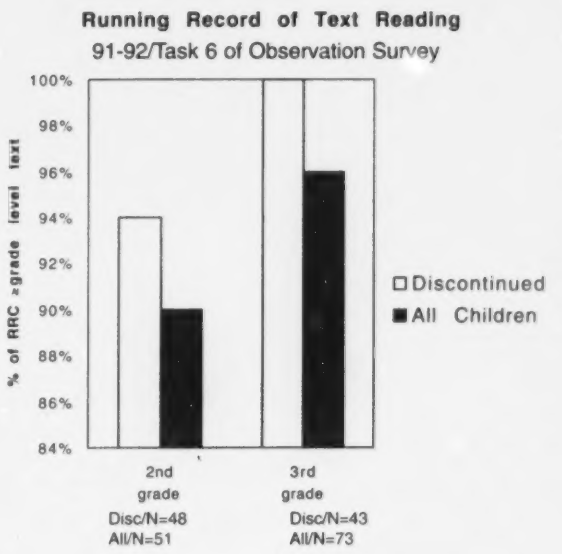

Figure 1

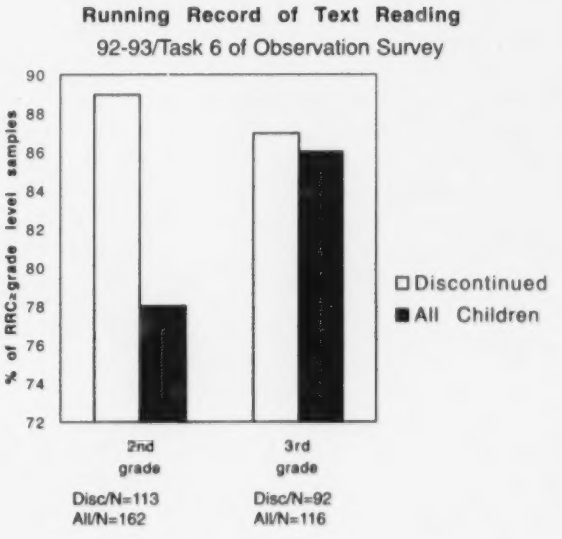

Figure 2

Question #2 Do Discontinued Reading Recovery children maintain the ability to read average level classroom materials as chosen by their teachers? Do they maintain this ability through the fifth grade?

Data reported in Figure 4 reflect the percent of successfully discontinued 1991-92 Reading Recovery children who read at or above grade level in second through fifth grade on material

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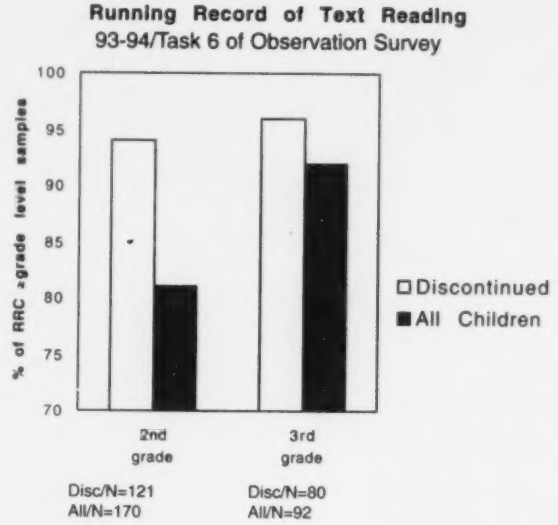

Figure 3

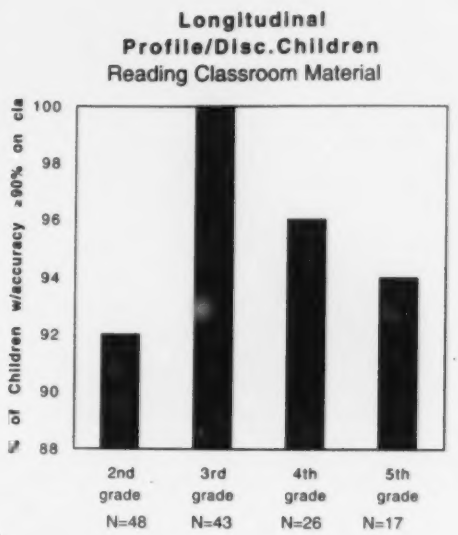

Figure 4

provided by their classroom teachers. Over 90% of the children who were successfully discontinued from their lessons during the first grade continued to be successful in their classrooms in later years.

While Figure 4 showed the percentage of children who could read with a 90% accuracy rate on classroom materials, Figure 5 indicates the mean accuracy score on the classroom materials read. First grade students for whom Reading Recovery lessons were discontinued in 1991-92, read classroom material with a mean accuracy score of 94.7% in second grade, 96% in third, 95.8% in fourth, and 94.7% in fifth grade.

At first we only were interested in looking at text reading for one group of children (first grade 1991-92) through all years in school. In question number 1, we analyzed data for text passages from Task 6 on the Observation Survey. We found the trend of successful children existed for the two subsequent classes of first graders as well. In exploring question number 2, we decided to look for the same pattern. Figures 6 and 7 indicate the trend does continue. For the first grade class of 1992-93, data were collected and analyzed through the fourth grade. For the first grade class of 1993-94, data were collected and analyzed through the third grade. Data reported in Figures 6 and 7 indicate children in both categories, discontinued and "all children" served, showed sustained growth over time.

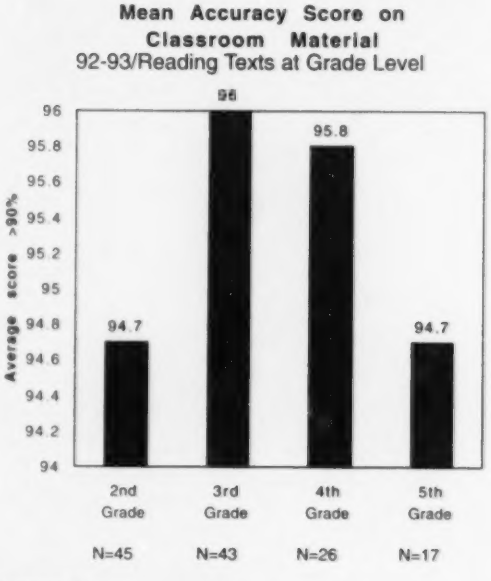

Figure 5

Summary

We are pleased with the long term effects of Reading Recovery in our consortium. Although this is only one way of looking at the longitudinal effects of the program, the body of evidence seems to indicate children do maintain the gains achieved and are able to benefit from regular classroom instruction in subsequent years in school. Children are able to read increasingly more difficult text as measured by the Observation Survey, and maintain the ability to read average level classroom materials through the fifth grade. Our study helped us watch how children who were considered at risk in

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the first grade continued to succeed in school. The data show strong indications that this trend will continue for future classes of first grade students.

Future Research

Beginning in 1996-1997, data were collected differently. All children in the followup study were only read with once during the spring of this year. A modified retelling was added for all children on both Task 6 and classroom reading samples. The addition of the retelling added more information about the children's comprehension of the passages.

Other changes will be made for followup research in 1997-98. Since time taken to test children is time away from Reading Recovery lessons, all information collected must be relevant and useful in monitoring the success of the children and the program. In looking at the information for this report, several issues became apparent.

First, there is a need to streamline and collect data in a more concise way. We will follow a stratified sample of children across the consortium. By beginning with a sample of one hundred children in second grade, it is our intention to have a minimum of fifty children still in our study by fifth grade. We are quite aware that the number of children left in the original study was inadequate. All children will be given only the selection which corresponds to the grade they are currently in, regardless of how high or low they scored the year before. This will make the gathering of data easier and answer the grade level question more directly.

Secondly, there is a need for a comparison group in each classroom and across grade levels. We have closely monitored the average of our first grade rooms this year, and we feel we have successfully discontinued more children. It would be quite helpful to continue to follow these same "average" children throughout the next five years. This will give us a comparison group to follow through grade school and test alongside our Reading Recovery children when giving Task 6 of the Observation Survey. The results show the Reading Recovery children are able to read the grade level passages or better, but no information exists on how average children who are not at risk would do on these same selections.

Thirdly, our findings of how the children were doing on classroom material depended on teacher recommendation of text. Although this is useful for each individual student and class, a control set of materials would be helpful. Since so many different districts and basal reading series are involved, the information collected is not consistent across the entire consortium. We would like to standardize the classroom materials used for everyone, and give these reading passages to Reading Recovery children and "average" children alike. We have proposed the use of the Developmental Reading Assessment by Joetta Beaver, and have started using this measure for new cohort groups.

We are quite confident that Reading Recovery is a powerful and successful early intervention program. It has shown to have long term effects for our Plainfield Consortium. With the continued hard work and help from Reading Recovery teachers in our districts we hope to continue to show, in other measures, the longitudinal effects of the program.

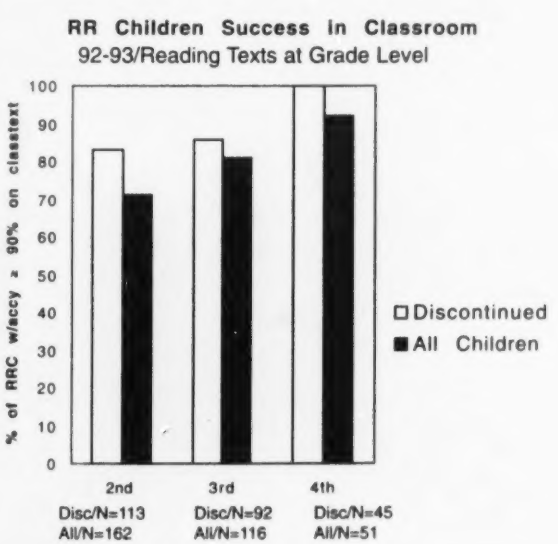

Figure 6

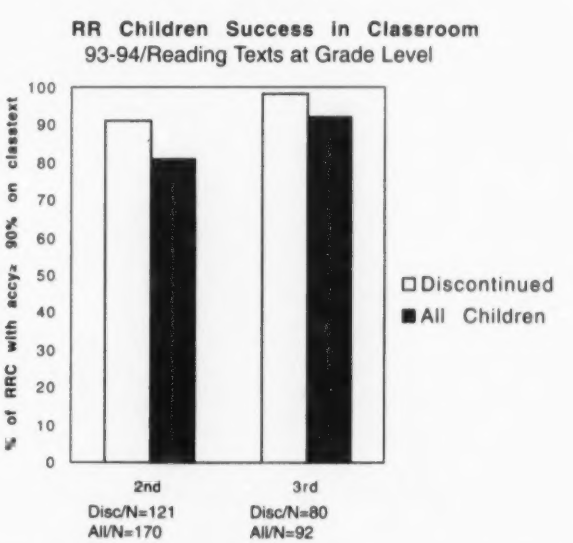

Figure 7